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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: LETTER FROM BENUE STATE GOVERNOR
REGARDING EMBASSY PRESS RELEASE

1. What follows below is the text of a November 20 letter to the Ambassador received from Benue State Governor George Akume in reaction to the Embassy's press statement regarding events in Benue.

Appreciation

I write on behalf of the Government and the people of Benue State to express our profound appreciation to the Government of the United States of America for its concern about the violence and destruction of lives and property in the state recently.

We are encouraged by this concern to believe that the Federal Government will listen to the respected voice of the United States to take appropriate measures to find a lasting solution to the ethnic crisis in Nasarawa and Taraba States. We are convinced that an "impartial and transparent" investigation as suggested by the United States Government will indeed provide the basis for such a solution.

It is regrettable that Benue State that is not directly involved in the conflict between the Tiv and their neighbors in Nasarawa and Taraba States had to bear the full brunt of the crises in terms of army reprisal killings and management of a large number of displaced persons. We however, consider this as the necessary price we have to pay for good neighborliness and the promotion of our nascent democracy. We will continue to do our best to support the restoration of peace, law and order in our zone.

Once again, accept our sincere gratitude and kindly convey same to the government of the United States

2. Comment: We were the only diplomatic mission to make a public statement about the Benue conflict. According to Akume, that statement may have given some solace to the people of the affected area. More importantly, the GON has established a panel of inquiry to investigate the situation in Benue and its neighboring states. While far from the decisive factor, our statement may have helped prod the GON into forming the investigative panel. Knowing that we are interested and watching may also have a positive effect on the workings of the panel. End comment.
Jeter